HOW CAN WE HELP IN SCHOOL?
KS3 & KS4

Vocabulary & Word Finding Skills

During their time in Secondary School young people are exposed to a large amount of curriculum specific vocabulary that is often covered at a rapid pace in lessons. They can struggle to learn and use new words and this affects their ability to understand instructions in school and the content of lessons. They may need to hear a new word many times in different situations before they are able to learn and use it meaningfully.

These are some things that you may notice if a young person is struggling to learn and/or use new words:

- they fail to understand instructions in the classroom
- their sentences do not always make sense
- they use words like 'thingy', 'it', 'that' and 'you know'. For example: *"Give me the thingy"*, *"Where is it?"* instead of *"Give me the tangerine"* and *"Where is the marker?"*
- they frequently uses the wrong words, for example, 'chicken' for 'turkey' or 'toothbrush' for 'toothpaste'

Research highlights the benefits of specific vocabulary teaching to pupil and the following ideas can provide support:

- Teach new vocabulary before a lesson where possible (pre-teaching) and recap vocabulary at the end of a lesson

- Use the new vocabulary within the lesson as often as possible, in different contexts, making sure the pupil understands the meaning of the words. New vocabulary will need to be recapped on several occasions and within context

- Produce a concise list of relevant vocabulary that the young person is expected to know for a certain topic/lesson. Choose words that will be of the most use in everyday life

- Spend time teaching the vocabulary to the young person. It is helpful to have pictures/objects to visually emphasise the word and for the words to be written up on the board

- Ensure that you give the young person the opportunity to practise saying the new words. Many young people who mispronounce words take these mispronunciations into adulthood

- Set up an individual word book to encourage the retention of vocabulary learnt in sessions. Picture materials in the word book will help to reinforce vocabulary

- Inform carers of the words covered in lessons so that they can support this learning at home, using the young person's word book

- Support vocabulary development with a colour coding system whereby different colours represent different types of word (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc)

- Give the young person informal "mini" tests to check his/her understanding. For example: *"What does……mean?", "What word means……?"*

- When the vocabulary is used in lessons remind the young person that it is a word that has been practiced. This may be enough to prompt recognition and recall.

- If a young person is displaying word finding difficulties and you know the word the pupil is trying to say, provide a meaning clue (e.g. for 'cat' – 'it's an animal', 'it drinks milk', 'it purrs')

- If the young person struggles to think of the correct word, see if they can think of what letter/sound the word starts with. If this is too difficult, you should give them the first sound/s or syllable.

- Alternatively if the young person struggles to think of the correct word, see if they can think of something that describes the word. For example: What does it look like? What is it used for? If they cannot remember then give these clues to help

- Encourage pupils to use a dictionary to look up word meanings

- Teach vocabulary in word webs (e.g. category, function and a descriptor word)

- When written instructions are given for tasks, discuss what the topic words are and what the function words are. Use colours to indicate this. For example, 'Describe and illustrate the process of evaporation'. Red indicates the function words – describe / illustrate/ list / record / formulate etc while green represents the topic area. Function words can be further discussed with child.

- When new words are introduced, break the word down (e.g. prefix, suffix,) for example 'evaporation' – 'evaporate' – 'vapour'. Use symbols like arrows to indicate going up into the sky, a key picture like a kettle / steam / water droplets etc.

- Use the strategy of Tiering vocabulary. This means looking at words in 3 levels as follows;

    Tier 1 are the most basic words, for example, "run", "ball", "is"
    Tier 2 these are academic words found in many curriculum areas but they travel across curriculum areas like "vocabulary", "example," "create", "add"
    Tier 3 are content words, less frequent words, words needed to understand the concept (e.g. "nutrient", "digestive", "ingesting")

You may choose to teach tier 2 words specifically as this will aid understanding across curriculum areas.

Tier 3 words can be taught within categories according to the subject (e.g. Biology) These words may be broken down further according to suffixes and affixes as below:

When new words are presented e.g. "National" discuss and identify the root word e.g. "Nation" which means "Country". Look at the suffix "al" which means "relating to". Therefore "National" means "relating to a Country. Lists of Affixes can be broken down into lists of pre fixes and suffixes with their associated meanings and used as a table to refer to.

Here are some examples of Affixes and their associated meanings

Prefixes		Suffixes	
No-not	anti in mis-un ir dis	**Able to**	-able -ible
Numbers	bi multi tri	**Relating to**	-ance -ence
Time	post pre	**One who**	-er -ite -ar
		Full of	-ful -y

Practical Activities:

- Mind Map – put the new word in the centre of the page with branches including:
    - Function (e.g. what does it do, what do we do with it, who can use it)
    - Location (i.e. where would you find it, category, groups the word belongs to)
    - Appearance (i.e. what does it look like including, colour, size, shape, texture, smell, no. of syllables)

- Blockbuster Game – the young person identifies a target word from a clue'. For example: 'What W is a country beside England?'

- Give Us a Clue – one young person picks a word, another rolls a dice to indicate how many clues they are allowed to hear in order to guess the word.

- Pass the Word – a word is 'passed' around the group with each young person thinking of something to say about it until ideas run out. The winner is the person with the most ideas

- Odd One Out – the young person picks the odd one out from a group of words, (e.g. 'London', 'Wales', 'Scotland', 'England')

If you require any further support/advice please contact via the following email

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In the subject line please state **FAO Virtual School SLCN Support** to ensure your message is actioned by the relevant team.